

Michael F. Geraci

Candidate for Rochester City Council

East District

- Name one issue on which you disagree with the current administration and why.

I disagree in particular with one of the Mayor's proposed "major changes" listed in this year's budget affecting the Rochester Fire Department, namely that: "Overtime is adjusted to reflect the proposed dynamic staffing model and projected needs." Dynamic Staffing is a mechanism to reduce costs through "browning out" a fire company, which is when the City would close down the company for certain shifts during which surrounding companies respond to the scene. In turn, dynamic staffing could slow response times and put individuals in our community at risk.

- What is the most important issue facing your district, and what is a specific proposal or action you propose to address it?

Rochester's shameful status as one of the most impoverished cities in the country is obviously issue #1 - those in poverty need our help. With that said, two other major issues directly tie in to and are both cause and effect of the poverty problem. That is: school systems and housing. Without adequate and safe housing, the students in our City have far more to worry about than their grades. Changing our School District and ultimately the levels of poverty in our communities is dependent upon ensuring safe and adequate housing for all students.

The East District has done a terrific job with growth and can be a leader when it comes to improving our city one neighborhood at a time. In the East District specifically, the aforementioned problems are amplified by the plethora of

absent landlords, which can lead to disagreements between tenants and landlords, as well as hurt the image and shape of the houses or apartments themselves. I would propose bringing back a version of the previously utilized point system that docks landlords for not taking care of their properties to assist with keeping our neighborhoods beautiful.

- Please identify one area in the city budget where you think the city should commit more resources than is currently proposed and why.

More resources should be devoted to the initiatives of the Department of Neighborhood & Business Development, which is focused on improving quality of life and creating economic opportunities for residents and businesses within the City of Rochester. I would specifically earmark money for small business development and innovation, as small businesses remain the backbone of the East District, and provide valuable jobs in our community. These jobs are ladders of opportunity for citizens in areas where transportation is inhibited and residents are without ready access to the business hubs in our outlying towns.

- What policies would you pursue to address housing affordability, evictions and/or landlord-tenant relations in your district?

The amount of rental property in the East District is approaching 65% of its total housing. While I believe that our District is fortunate to enjoy mostly responsible landlords with deep roots in the community and who do their best to maintain aging properties in our vibrant neighborhoods, there are also some bad apples that spoil the bunch by neglecting their property. Those derelict properties negatively affect our neighborhoods from a beautification, safety, and financial standpoint due to the effect on surrounding property values. As already mentioned, to combat absentee landlords I would pursue a point system

which could lead to fines or other sanctions for landlords who are not responsive to tenant needs, and to further hold landlords accountable and increase positive communication between landlords and tenants.

- Will you vote for the Police Accountability Board as proposed in November – why or why not?

I would not vote for the Police Accountability Board as proposed in November because I do not believe that the proposal will withstand legal scrutiny due to its terms which run afoul of New York State Law, the City Charter, and implicated union contract. It does not serve our citizens to advance legislation that will not legally be upheld.

- Do you support Mayor Warren's push for a referendum calling for removal of the elected school board in favor of a state takeover of RCSD/appointed board, and why?

I disagree with a state takeover of the city school district because I support keeping our government a democracy and this is an extreme step away from that, which should be avoided at all costs. Voters and educational experts are qualified and able to find solutions to each of the issues that our school district faces. We've just instituted a new superintendent and must allow new policies and strategies rather than put him down immediately and suggest a new regime. That is all without mentioning that RCSD graduation rates have been climbing - slowly, but surely, and we must look at this progress positively. Of course, the rates right now are not where we want them to be - but a major overhaul of a school district takes time to accomplish, and we are moving in the right direction.

It's premature to propose a referendum on state takeover of the school district, when we expect to see legislation presented soon by Assemblyman Harry Bronson, which should offer a more limited plan tailored to the recommendations of the distinguished educator.

- What current policy or practice of city government would you seek to change if (re)elected, and why?

No answer provided.